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# The Warfare of Peace

Convocation Address by

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First Presbyterian Church

Lake Forest, Illinois

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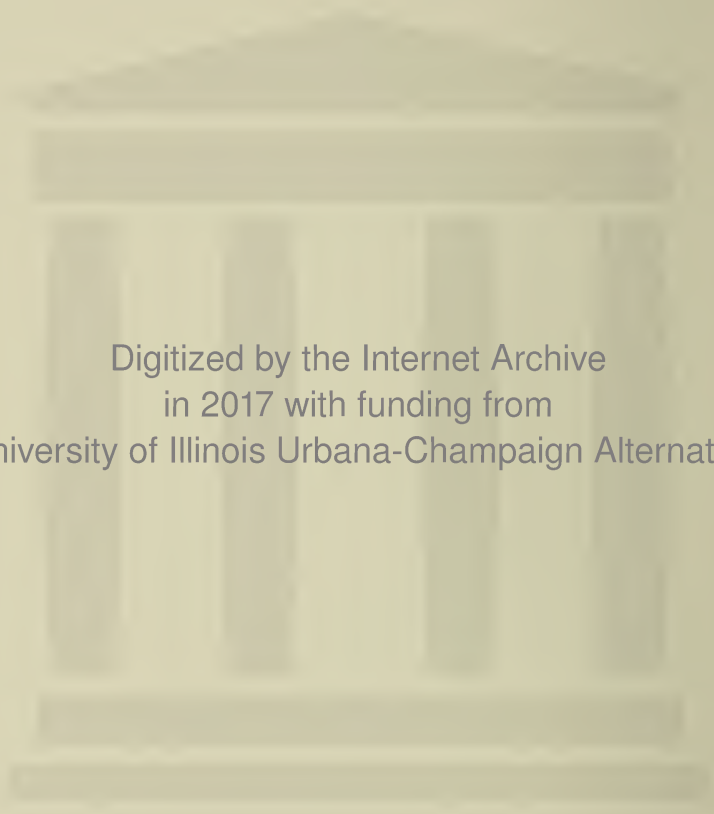
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THE WARFARE OF PEACE

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Luke iv:5. *And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* 6. *And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them; for it hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.* 7. *If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine.* 8. *And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Moments of decision in the lives of great men have a peculiar dramatic interest. The Greek tradition gave a typical expression to this interest in the ancient story of Hercules at the cross-roads, summoned one way by Virtue, lured the other way by Pleasure; and there was a famous moral lesson for many centuries in this strong man's choice of hardship and trial working out the good, rather than of pleasure and ease leading to evil.

This same typical situation appears in striking form in the accounts we have of Jesus' preparation for his ministry. The episode has its place at the threshold of all the three biographical gospels, and in both Matthew and Luke it is treated with fine dramatic sense, and with a vivacity that gives it, through all its deep seriousness, almost a touch of humor. But the situation is fundamentally serious, and it is not too much to say that we have here the most significant personal decision in all the history of human kind; for upon the outcome of this struggle in the soul of a solitary man in the wilderness of Judea hung, so far as we can see, the whole trend of later development in the thought of men about their responsibility toward their fellows. For surely the life and the teaching that grew out of that temptation scene have been the inspiration of the really constructive movements in human society for almost two thousand years, and it is inevitable

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that any change in the direction of that life must have made an immense difference in these movements, through the widening process of the ages. No other man's influence in this respect is even remotely to be compared with that of Jesus of Nazareth.

This season of testing and of decision in the life of Jesus therefore has far-reaching historical significance as well as great biographical interest. It furnishes the key to Jesus' solution of the ancient riddle of human life; and other solution hath no man given that can stand the test of human experience.

The epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are;" and the phrase that follows, "yet without sin," is not a mere foregone conclusion, but the reward of a great moral victory. It is no sham battle, then, that is reported in the graphic story of the Temptation, but a real struggle with a terrible adversary, the sort that Paul and Augustine and Luther and Bunyan and you and I have always had to fight whenever our passion and our ambition have gripped us with fierce hunger for the thing that our conscience and our faith must condemn. And how like an angel of light the adversary can clothe himself—in what noble and even philanthropic guise may not the tempter appear as he lures us his way! If you and I have any experience of life, we know that the sophistry of passion is a perilous thing for the strongest and the wisest to listen to.

Indeed, what nobler passion, what more exalting human impulse, could the tempter have appealed to than that through which the insidious attack is made in the verses of the text? If ambition be an infirmity, it is the infirmity of the greatest and noblest minds. Is it not rather a virtue than an infirmity, commended by the wise to the youth of all the centuries as the quality necessary to high success? Are not we pedagogues and preachers always telling our young people that there is room at the top, and bidding them to hitch their wagon to a star? We all admire and praise ambition, we scorn the lack of it.

Inevitably the temptation of a high ambition works most powerfully upon the greatest minds. The strong hand fits the

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sword of conquest and the sceptre of authority, the big brain conceives the orderly system of empire, the genius for leadership has dominion thrust upon it, the power of organization tempered with the spirit of philanthropy suggests the clean efficiency of a benevolent despotism. Is not this, perhaps, after all, the ideal of human government—righteousness and mercy and peace and love personified in a great monarch, to whom the whole realm is knit in affectionate loyalty?

Some such ideal as this, we may surmise, flashed upon the brooding mind of Jesus in the wilderness, when he beheld “all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,” and had presented to his hand the sceptre of authority over them. There was nothing impossible in the vision. For Jesus had the quality of a great leader, and there was ready to his hand, in the fanaticism of the Jews, and their undying hopes of world empire, material far more promising than that out of which Mohammed in his Arabian desert later forged his mighty sword of conquest. And this ideal must have made the more urgent appeal to the young prophet from Nazareth, because it was exactly the golden vision to which his whole people had looked forward with eager and unconquerable yearning through all the centuries of its weary pilgrimage.

Jesus upon the throne of David, imposing, upon a world that was bleeding from a thousand battles and weary of its worn-out paganism, the authority of a perfect character, the ideals of a mind that could penetrate the darkest problems of human life, the purity of a heart that could see God—what a glorious vision of deliverance for the distracted race of man! How mightily must such a vision move upon the spirit of the man who feels within himself the power to stretch forth his hand over the kingdoms of the earth and transform them into the paradise of God! Could there be a worthier ambition for the strongest and the saintliest of men?

But Jesus sees through all the glamour of this supreme ambition, and to him it is only another lure of the spirit of evil. He



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knows that there is no permanence, no real potency for good, in the power that imposes itself upon a conquered race, in the authority that seeks to establish good by a fiat from above. He cannot surrender the deepest convictions and the highest inspiration of his pure soul to the vain old Jewish dream of a world dominion that must be transitory even if it were ever realized. For it is reserved for him to demonstrate to men the prophetic word of Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." It is not for him to choose the easy and tempting way of exploiting his own power and wisdom and the weakness and ignorance of his fellow-men, but rather to choose the hard and heroic way of sacrifice; and in this way Jesus of Nazareth comes forth from the temptation in the wilderness to build the spiritual kingdom of God among men. That is the result of the most momentous personal decision in all history. Out of it grows the life of peculiar service which, though unsupported by any of the props of wealth or station by which men usually make themselves prominent, yet becomes for all succeeding time the inspiration of the best lives upon earth; out of it grew the sacrificial death, that made the cross the eternal symbol of the highest faith and hope and victory.

There has been, to be sure, a strange inconsistency in the attitude of the world toward the new ideals established by Jesus. Wherever the Gospel has been preached, and the example of Christian living manifested, there men have learned more and more in their personal relations to practice righteousness and peace and courtesy and self-giving. But it has seemed to be exceedingly difficult to adapt these modern Christian principles of right and decent living to the wider and more complicated industrial and political relations of men; and where the largest existing groups of human beings are involved, in the settling of international and racial problems, the progress of civilized methods has been painfully slow. In the light of recent events, it seems as if the world were still content to go blundering on in the savage and stupid way of Mohammed, a way that has been definitely out of date



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ever since the coming of the long-heralded Prince of Peace.

Many good people seem to have given up all hope of real betterment in this matter, and to take it for granted that the vision of Isaiah is impossible of realization by mortal man: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." And it must be confessed that we have had a melancholy exhibition during these past months of the apparent impotence even of the greatest nations to impose peace upon far weaker nations that are intoxicated by warlike passion. Did not the "concert of Europe," representing all the greatest military powers of the world, solemnly forbid war in the Balkans, and then just as solemnly announce that the war must not lead to the partition of Turkey, and then in the face of accomplished facts attempt to delimit the new frontier, only to be flouted even in this attempt by the very nation that was hopelessly beaten in the first struggle? What could go further to show that no human power can prevent war if peoples want to fight, and that after all the test of arms still determines the fate of nations?

But if we look below the surface in this recent orgy of slaughter and rapine in the Balkans and in Macedonia, we shall see that no historic event could be a clearer proof of the utter bankruptcy of war. We have seen with our own eyes the truth of a striking saying of Jesus, in that the empire established by the conquering sword of Mohammed is actually perishing by the sword; and we have seen too the very nations that were the instruments of the long-delayed historic vengeance, showing in their own cynical and selfish savagery what a horrible crop springs up from the sowing of the dragon's teeth. We have seen a struggle bearing the fair semblance of a "holy war," pretending to be instinct with the generous spirit of the Crusades, turned into a bloody travesty, and ending in a greedy and murderous quarrel over the spoils. And the final harvest of this pretended war of the Cross against the Crescent is an abomination of desolation and blood and fire visited upon the whole territory of the struggle, and such an intensifying of national hatreds and suspicions as will create quick

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pretexts for further aggression, and as will delay for many years the concord in which alone these small nations can find safety. They fancied, these deluded statesmen and soldiers, that with military power they could conquer for their peoples what Emperor William calls "a place in the sun;" instead they have plunged them into the bitter darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The devil of war is an arrogant and self-satisfied devil, just like the evil spirit who whispered temptations to Jesus; for he too shows his dupes "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" and says to their ambitions: "To you will I give all this authority, and the glory of them, for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." But this devil is a liar, as are all his kind, for he has no power over the things that remain, and the best fruits he has to give are apples of Sodom, that turn to ashes on the lips of those who taste.

We are living in a time when the world is learning, slowly indeed, but effectively, that the philosophy of Jesus' life is not only of private and personal, but also of public and universal application. The lingering, but surely dying, cruelty of war is but one illustration of this; there are other illustrations in every department of our political and social and economic life. We know that the beast of prey is a picturesque survival of a by-gone age. There are still some splendid specimens of him at large in our various jungles, but they are doomed to extinction by the fateful processes of civilization. The reign of force, the empire of exploitation and selfish conquest, is still with us, no doubt, but only as a vanishing survival. The irresistible movement of social evolution sets toward the establishment of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus. And that is the supreme object of Christian education.

Education is, indeed, the modern, the civilized, the Christian method, supplanting with its constructive and conserving power the destructive and wasteful methods of the past. Everybody knows, who can see beneath mere appearances, that even such a martial nation as Germany is strong not so much in her huge

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armaments as in her schools and her laboratories. In order that it may be modern and civilized and Christian, education may not be the exclusive prerogative of the few, fitting them to prey upon the many, but it must be open and democratic, giving fitness to the many, that they may all together learn to serve effectively. This point is centrally important, and must be emphasized: the purpose of education is not power for conquest and authority, but power for investment, for service, for sacrifice; it is the grain of wheat that falls into the earth and there gives up its life, that bears fruit an hundred-fold. No education is worthy to be called Christian that does not lead its beneficiaries in some way to such a decision as Jesus reached in his solitary struggle in the wilderness, when he turned his back definitely upon the lure of royal ambitions and set his feet in the way that led to the Cross.

It is the natural desire of people who have borne the burden and heat of a toilsome day to desire for their children an easier ascent to the summits of attainment. Many parents who have gone through the bitter hardships of pioneering crave the benefits of a higher education for their sons and daughters, because they think they will thus secure for their more delicately reared offspring the ease and comfort that they themselves were denied. And the progress of material science seems to meet this craving more than half way; for, literally, the sons of those who walked or jogged and jolted can now ride cushioned on air. But after all that is a very short-sighted view of the matter. Education is really not intended to make life easy, but rather to prepare people to do the hard things that otherwise would be impossible. To make five bushels grow where one grew before, to give ten people decent conditions of living where one had them before, to lead a city or a nation in ways of righteousness and peace where a former generation was content to pluck some brands from the universal burning, these are a few of the miracles that are worthy the Christian ambition of educated men and women; and such miracles are possible only to the educated.

The apologists for the old savage and destructive methods of

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the past have always been eloquent in praising the educational value of war itself, apprehensive lest in the absence of the drill and struggle and blood-letting, men should grow flabby and feeble and degenerate. William James was led by this old cry to propose, as "a moral equivalent for war," that during the regular military term of service all the young men of the nation should be drafted to do the hard and disagreeable and dangerous tasks of civilization, in the mines and forests and factories, on railways and the sea; all this as an apprenticeship, to give moral as well as physical bone and sinew to the young citizenship. The idea is ingenious and suggestive, and if it could be carried out it would undoubtedly mean a salutary toughening of the somewhat lax fibre of the spoiled children of today. It would have the great advantage, too, of making the apprenticeship really productive and beneficent, whereas the present activity of recruits in the armed camps of the world is altogether wasteful. Unfortunately this is one of those Utopian schemes which would require the fiat of a despot who was both absolute and benevolent, and even then it would probably throw our whole economic machinery out of gear.

After all, it is not so much a question of making young people endure physical hardship and privation and peril, though these may furnish an excellent school of character. The real question is how to give the children of the nation the intellectual power and skill and rectitude that are urgently demanded by the intricate social tasks of the twentieth century, to endow them with the moral stamina that cannot be broken down by the sophistry of passion, to lift them up to the spiritual vision that makes men the imperishable heirs of God. And this is precisely what our whole gigantic system of popular education is for; and when it falls short of attaining this high object, it is just to that extent a failure.

We believe that the Christian school and college have an essential part in this monumental and yet most delicate task. For the Christian institution of learning unites in a unique way the elements that make up the sort of education we are talking about;



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it unites the intellectual honesty, the devoted and fearless search for truth, that are found in the modern classroom and laboratory, with the ideal of moral purity and spiritual insight and glad self-giving, that are expressed for us in the name of Jesus. For that reason the graduates of Christian colleges ought to be the best of all our citizens, the most fit and ready to show in their own lives and establish through their influence the power and the beauty of the kingdom of God among men.

The chance at such a place of Christian leadership in human society is the precious privilege and the solemn obligation coming to you young people who are just beginning to work out the destiny of another academic year at Lake Forest. Like Moses before the burning bush, you are standing on holy ground; for the months and years that lie just before you glow with a brilliancy of promise that you will never know again, and there dwells in them a power which, taken into your lives, can make you leaders of your fellow-men in their toilsome journey to the promised land. Like Jesus in the wilderness, you too will find the tempter at your side, or rather in your own hearts, luring you by the lying offer of all that is sweet to your passion and your ambition. We must all suffer that test of the stuff that is in us, not once but many times; you remember that even of Jesus, after he emerged victorious from the solitary struggle in the wilderness, it is said that the tempter departed from him only "for a season." But at one time, for most of us, the test is crucial, and that is the moment of decision from which we come forth permanently strengthened or broken. You students are at the age when, most often, the crucial test does come. May you be fortified by the unyielding trust in God through which Jesus triumphed over his temptation. And may you some day justify the high purpose of the Christian institution with which you have identified yourselves, by going out in the strength of your education to establish among men righteousness and peace and the saving love that shines forth from the very throne of God through the person of Jesus, who was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

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And do not be deceived in the purpose of this higher education. We have no desire to make things easy for you; if we did that, we should doubtless do you more harm than good. It is rather our ambition to equip you for the hardest work a human being can undertake, the work of independent thinking that shall lead, because of the Christian spirit within you, to bravely unselfish action. We wish you to learn to speak boldly and live honestly the truth as you see it, without fear of the scribes and Pharisees and Herods and Pilates of your day, without yielding to the blandishments of the tempter who is sure to find the most enticing appeal to your heart. But we hope to teach you also the modesty of true learning, which sees nothing else more clearly than its own limitations, and always gives the other view the courtesy of a respectful hearing and of honest consideration.

Above all, we trust that the influence of this place may make you always conscious of the presence of God; for it is a poor and a starveling soul that lives without reverence—only the fool can say in his heart “There is no God.” The test of your reverence will be your loyalty, that virtue by whose power men do all the good and high and heroic things that illumine human conduct. As President Hadley said in a recent address: “In any conflict which is worthy of the name, strength counts for less than intelligence, intelligence for less than discipline, discipline for less than self-sacrifice; unswerving devotion is the thing that counts for most of all.” In your College life, you will develop strength and intelligence and self-control. God grant that your strong, rational, disciplined manhood and womanhood may be crowned by the perfect devotion that can give a divine grace and glory to every deed of man.







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